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Summer 2005

News and Views, Summer 2005

West Virginia Autism Training Center

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The West Virginia Autism Training Center

<http://www.marshall.edu/coe/atc>

Summer/Fall 2005

at  **MARSHALL UNIVERSITY**
Huntington, WV

From the Director

Barbara Becker-Cottrill, Ed.D.

Greetings to all of our WV Autism Training Center families, colleagues and friends. We have a new look for our newsletter and lots of news from our education specialists and families. Summer went racing by but not without the development of some exciting new programs. A summer drama camp for teens was a wonderful example of community collaboration and support resulting in a therapeutic and fun event for everyone involved! Heartfelt thanks go to The Marshall University Theater Department and Micheal Fesenmeier and to the Huntington Museum of Art. I attended the performance on the last day of the camp and I was beaming with pride. As I looked around at the audience, I was not alone. The actors were remarkable each and every one. A summer social skills group was also held in Morgantown. We plan to start similar programs for more teens next year in new locations around the state.

Fall is now upon us with the excitement and sometimes nervousness accompanied with the opening of a new school year. We have been getting to know new families on the Family Focus Positive Behavior Support (FFPBS) model and are facilitating the development of teams for their children. This is our main model of service to families. For those of you who may not be familiar with the FFPBS model, you can read about Emma's journey with PBS on page 4 of this newsletter along with several other articles about FFPBS. I think you will see from these articles the FFPBS model embodies collaboration and a shared vision that can result in some pretty fantastic outcomes. With all of the challenges facing our citizens with autism spectrum disorders and their families, the successes and joy they can experience is something we need to share and celebrate. When we work together as a team with the same vision of helping an individual reach their potential, we seldom lose.

Also upon us is the start of the fourth year of our College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome. We welcome four new students this semester and are excited for them as they begin this new and exciting adventure. At the other end of the age spectrum, we welcome our Circle of Friends Preschool students to our schools in Huntington and in the Northern Panhandle in Weirton.

It will be a busy Fall with the ongoing implementation of FFPBS and the continuation of in-service training and workshops across the state. As well, our collaboration with

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the surveillance of autism in West Virginia continues. I hope you will enjoy this latest edition of our newsletter and will contact me at 1 800 344 5115 (WV only) if you have any comments or a story idea!



Theater Games Drama Camp

By Gloria Sage, Program Coordinator

The Huntington Museum of Art was the location for Autism Training Center's first Drama Camp held on June 28-30th, 2005.

Theater Games Drama Camp was a project of ATC's Model Programs Committee, which wanted to provide a summer activity for young teens with Asperger's Syndrome.

Students with and without Asperger's Syndrome attended the camp and participated in a variety of activities, including playing a number of "theater games," choosing roles for a play, designing and painting a backdrop, choosing costumes and props and performing the play, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, for family and friends on the last day of camp.

After the play, students and families were treated to a mesmerizing magic show performed by the mysterious "Dr. Mirage," a.k.a. Michael Fesenmeier, who also provided invaluable technical assistance.

The students and staff had a great time, made some new friends and were able to be creative and try something new. Some of the students' comments were "I liked using my imagination," "The thing I liked most was making new friends," and "I can't wait till next year!"

Thanks to Everyone Who Participated !

Table of Contents

1. Director's Comments	Title Page
2. Theater Games Drama Camp.	Title Page
3. The First Time He Giggled	Page 1
4. White Picket Fences & Other Myths	Page 2
5. Our Journey.	Page 2
6. The Puzzle of Autism	Page 2
7. Steps.	Page 2
8. National Survey on Positive Behavior Support: Your Response is Needed.	Page 3
9. ATC Staff Attend National Positive Behavior Support Conference.	Page 3
10. Emma's Journey with PBS	Page 4
11. Videotaped Self Modeling	Page 5
12. Crisis Services in WV Study Announcement	Page 5
13. Another School Year Gone By	Page 6
14. Congratulations Page.	Page 7
15. Circle of Friends Preschool Graduation Day	Page 8
16. Children from Beyond.	Page 9
17. 10 Habits of Successful College Students.	Page 10
18. Words of Wisdom.	Page 10
19. Lessons Learned: How I Improved My Relationship with the School System	Page 11
20. A Book Review of The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun.	Page 12
21. Research to Find the Genetic Factors in ASD.	Page 12
22. What About Us? Supporting Siblings of Persons with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities	Page 13

The First Time He Giggled

By Erin Lash, Educational Specialist Sr.

For some students in Mineral County, the end of the school day brings a different type of learning atmosphere, the after school program in Piedmont. The after school program has been in operation for 9 years and is funded through a Methodist Church grant. The program serves learners in grades first through eighth.

Miss Betty Ann, the program coordinator, and the staff, which includes volunteers and foster grandparents, look forward to each day with the children. The program operates Monday through Thursday until 5:30. The children receive help with their homework, craft time, Sunday school type lessons and dinner.

The program welcomes all children and RaHeem Bartlett Harrison was no exception.

RaHeem is a sweet little boy and a member of the Piedmont community. RaHeem is also a learner with autism. This past year, RaHeem was in the first grade at Keyser Primary/Middle and was old enough to attend the after-school program. RaHeem was embraced by Miss Betty Ann and her staff from the very beginning.

The staff was determined to make this a fun and productive time for RaHeem. They incorporated adaptations and proactive strategies to accommodate RaHeem's needs. RaHeem receives one-on-one instruction with homework tasks. Social skills were modeled and practiced during craft activities and large group structured game situations. The staff incorporates break times into RaHeem's homework time and during lengthier craft sessions to keep him from being overwhelmed. The staff recognized when Ra-

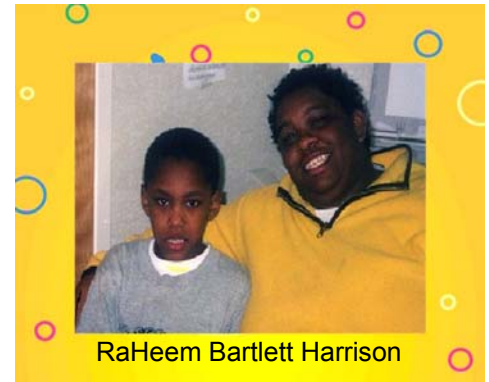
Heem was becoming over stimulated in the large group and allowed him the time and space needed to recover before behavioral issues arose.

When first approached about whether they had had the privilege to work with a learner with autism, the ladies said they had not. Piedmont is a small, caring community, so they knew that RaHeem would be a member of their program in the future.

To allow for an easy transition, a year prior to his inclusion in the program, RaHeem would "pop" in from time to time to see what was happening. The ladies allowed him to visit often for as long as he wished. This strategy allowed RaHeem to become familiar with the staff and the routine and removed any uncertainty he may have had about joining the group.

Tanya, RaHeem's mother, says that each morning he asks if he is going to the after school program. Tanya says, "The after-school program is wonderful. RaHeem not only received one-on-one attention with his school work, but caring and loving attention with a personal touch."

Miss Betty Ann and her staff greatly enjoy having RaHeem in



RaHeem Bartlett Harrison

"Oh, how wonderful it was the first time he giggled!"

their program and feel he has taught them so very much. There have been many special times since RaHeem has joined the after school program. When asked if there was one thing that she has taken away from her experiences with RaHeem, Miss Betty Ann quickly replies, "Oh, how wonderful it was the first time he giggled!"

Miss Betty Ann and her staff greatly enjoyed having RaHeem in their program and feel that he has taught them so very much.



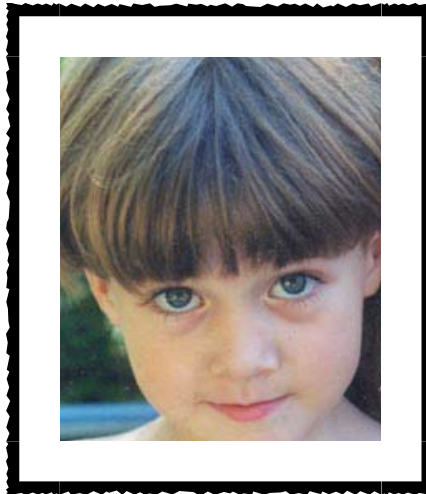
After school program staff



White Picket Fences and Other Myths

By Sally Meyer, parent

There are days
when I feel alone
when life is so different
than I imagined.
Of course I wanted the
white picket fence,
the two kids,
and the dog.
Who doesn't?
But dreams are like that,
they disappear
in the morning of life,
and we wake
to reality.
with a thump
as we fall out of our
bed of roses.
Is it silly to still dream?
is it naive
to ponder?
I sit sometimes on my porch
when the house is
still, reflecting on these
last few years,
when that little boy
wandered into our lives.
Oh how he wanders!
like a pixie, an elf,
a wonderful little creature
who fascinates and
terrifies us all.
Who can know him?
Does he know himself?
Who is he, and where is the key
to unlock, to discover, to hold,
and to find?
Oh yes, I wanted it all
back then, before he came,
didn't realize that his coming
would change me so,
that a small boy could work
his way into my heart,
twisting it somewhat
tearing it sometimes,
but finding his place, nonetheless.
And I still can dream,
despite the sadness,
in spite of the pain,
I dream in color now,
back then it was
all black and white
picket fences.
Autism is not the end of the World. . .
just the beginning of a new one.
c.1999 Sally Meyer



Sally's love, light, and inspiration
for her beautiful poems....Dhylan

Our Journey

By Sally Meyer, parent

Abide with me, as I journey
take my hand, I dare not walk alone.
Lean on me, when life gets weary,
I will help you, 'til we're grown.
Sometimes I won't know your sorrow,
you may not always see my tears,
if you stumble on your journey,
I will lift you... calm your fears.
One day we will know the answer
to that searching question....Why?
Yet for now, we'll walk together
hand in hand, as life goes by.
Our pathway is not lined with roses
but there is magic in a smile,
this road we travel may be lonely
but there are rainbows once in a while.
Help me as I climb my mountain,
in the valley I have grown
put your weary hand in my hand,
we cannot, dare not, walk alone.
(an excerpt from the book
One More Blessing
the story of a small boy
and his struggle with autism)
c. Sally Meyer 1996

The Puzzle of Autism

By Lauren Whisman, age 12, a friend
to people with Autism

A piece of a puzzle to put together,
A mystery to still uncover,
Words and writing so confusing,
Love and beauty hidden away,
When will there come a day?

Steps

By Bridgett Sullivan, parent

The doctors said congratulations,
You have a healthy baby boy.
I looked at you and saw your face,
You filled my heart with joy.
Each doctor visit came and went,
With nothing really new.
You were small and really shy,
And you were just so cute.
Years went by, nothing said,
About my pride and joy.
Then one day I realized,
You were not like the other boys.
I ran to people looking for help,
Answers to be said.
Then one day they told me,
Autism, its in his head.
I looked around scatter brained,
Not knowing what to do.
Were they saying my little boy,
Was no longer a dream come true.
I had seen autism a few times,
To be honest I had my fears.
Was it true my little boy?
Then I cried so many tears.
Anger was the first step,
I took along my way.
"They are wrong,
they don't know my boy."
Was all that I could say.
Next I felt the sadness,
You feel when loved ones pass.
Was it true ... my little boy,
Will never be within my grasp?
So many steps along the way,
So different from one another.
I'm just glad I realized,
We still have each other.
No longer do I feel alone,
Walking through this maze.
Holding on to Jacob's hand,
Struggling through the days.
Now I have my team of friends,
Professionals by my side.
Holding onto my hand,
Trying to be my guide.
But as we walk along the way,
I wonder what to do.
How can help my little boy,
Make his dreams come true.
Then along the journey,
Something happened to me.
I was no longer leading Jacob,
He was leading me.
He taught me things I didn't know,
Showed me things I didn't see.
Made me into who I am,
My son gave me.... Me.
So instead of crying useless tears,
And wondering what to do.
I look at Jacob and realize,
Your life is up to you.
If he can help to guide me,
And not lead me astray,
Then I can help another,
Hold their hand along the way.

National Survey on Positive Behavior Support: Your Response is Needed.

Drs. Linda Bambara and Lee Kern from Lehigh University are conducting a national survey sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education on implementing positive behavior supports (PBS) in schools for students with disabilities who engage in challenging behaviors. The purpose of the survey is to learn from school personnel, parents, and PBS trainers/consultants about what it takes to make PBS work in schools and what some of the barriers are that must be addressed. The results of the survey will be used to help improve services and supports to students.

The West Virginia Autism Training Center is co-sponsoring this activity by mailing the survey to school personnel and family members who have been involved with our team training on PBS, Family Focus Positive Behavior Support, over the past several years. Because survey information is only as good as the responses received, your individual response to the survey is very important. It's critical to hear from all voices and perspectives about what needs to be done to make PBS most effective.

We truly appreciate your taking the time to respond to the survey. If you have already responded, THANK YOU. If you have not, please take a few minutes to respond. If you have misplaced the survey or would like another copy, please call or email Linda Bambara or Jennifer McFarland at the numbers listed. Also, don't hesitate to contact us should you have any questions about the survey.

For information, contact
Linda Bambara (610) 758-3271,
lmb1@lehigh.edu

Dr. Jennifer McFarland, (304) 696-
2332, mcfarlan@marshall.edu

*Thank You for Helping Us
Make a Difference:
Improving Positive Behavior
Supports for Students!*

ATC Staff Attend National Positive Behavior Support Conference

By Charlotte Hays, Program Coordinator Sr.

The Second Annual International Conference for Positive Behavior Support was held in Tampa, Florida in March. Attendees came from all over to learn more about Positive Behavior Support (PBS), a set of research-based strategies used to increase *quality of life* and decrease problem behavior by teaching new skills and making changes in a person's environment. PBS is an approach that blends values about the rights of people with disabilities with behavioral science. The Family Focus Positive Behavior Support process, offered by the West Virginia Autism Training Center, is based on this approach.

This conference offered over fifty presentations on methods, aspects, issues, and research in Positive Behavior Support by well-respected leaders in the field of PBS. These presentations included three given by our staff of the West Virginia Autism Training Center. An overview of the ATC College program was developed by Dr. Kim Ramsey, Program Coordinator, and presented by Dr. Barbara-Becker-Cottrill, Executive Director. A presentation on how to measure outcomes of PBS was presented by Dr. Becker-Cottrill and Dr.

Jennifer McFarland, Associate Director/Training. In addition, PBS in Rural Areas was presented by Erin Lash, Educational Specialist and Dana White, Community Partner Coordinator.

West Virginia was well represented at the conference with seven staff from the West Virginia Autism Training Center in attendance as well as others involved in PBS in our state.

The Third Annual International Conference for PBS will be held in Reno, Nevada, from March 23 - 25, 2006.

Mark Your Calendars!

March 2006						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Emma's Journey With PBS

By Amanda Glass, Educational Specialist Sr.

Emma is four years old and has autism. She was diagnosed at two and a half years of age and received Birth to Three services for a few months before she aged out of the system. Emma's mother applied for Family Focus Positive Behavior Support (FFPBS) Training and was accepted a few short months later. Emma began her FFPBS training and started special needs preschool at the same time. Both her family and preschool teachers were eager to receive training about autism and to set a good beginning for Emma in her early childhood years.

At the start of FFPBS, Emma was verbalizing two-three word phrases to her family. She was sometimes speaking to her teachers at school and gesturing to her peers. She was eating five foods at home and was being fed by her mother most of the time. She was able to follow rules at school, but had tantrums at home when asked to perform tasks. Emma played parallel to her peers at school, but had no interest in her three siblings who lived at home. She would sit on the toilet only at school. While shopping at the community grocery store, she tolerated the purchase of a two item shopping list and then was ready to leave the store, making shopping trips difficult for her mother. Her father worked full time, while her mother stayed at home with the children. Emma had been accepted into the Title IX Waiver program and had a QMRP who visited the home monthly to address sensory needs, safety and daily living skills with Emma and her family.

Emma's team was developed; consisting of her mother, first grade teacher, autism men-



tor, speech language pathologist, QMRP, Community Partner and PBS trainer. The team met monthly for four all day lectures and small team meetings. At the beginning of the process, during the PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrow's with Hope), the team determined priority areas to be addressed for Emma. The goals established by the team included: feeding herself with utensils and eating a wider variety of foods, initiating and engaging in interactions with her peers, using the bathroom independently, decreasing tantrums, enjoying herself while shopping at the community grocery store and increasing her communication skills.

The team decided to collect baseline data on Emma's interactions with peers and also her tantrums at home in order to develop appropriate interventions across the settings. The team determined through a functional assessment process that at times, Emma had difficulty with transition and did not have the skills to communicate her wants and needs.

To assist Emma with transition at home, communication skills, social skills and community toleration abilities, the team developed a variety of strategies. Emma's QMRP, PBS trainer, Community Partner and mother trained Emma on the use of Pic-

ture Exchange Communication System (PECS). The team created a social story and developed opportunities for Emma to socialize with her peers. She was involved in the creation of a video entitled *Playing with My Friends* along with a peer from school. Her team also created visuals for Emma's family to use while shopping at the grocery store and while following a schedule at home. Emma was encouraged to appropriately use the bathroom by developing a social story. "Another social story was created to increase appropriate play with her younger sibling in addition to several stories generalizing her ability to grocery shop at more than one community store.

Emma's confidence and skills rose dramatically as a result of the strategies developed through the FFPBS process. By the end of the process, Emma was verbally completing full sentences to communicate her wants and needs. She was using the bathroom and independently completing daily living skills at home and school. She learned to use utensils while eating a wider variety of food. Emma's mother was able to take her shopping at three grocery stores and Emma tolerated the purchase of more than twenty items at each store! She became more social in the classroom, increasing interactions to an average of ten interactions during play time at school. Overall, Emma has grown to be more independent and become a valuable member of her preschool classroom.

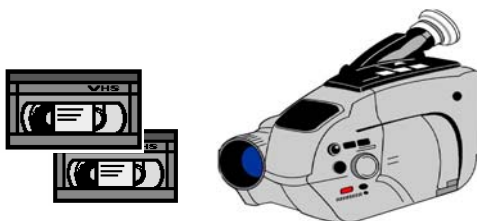
Give Now!

Donations to support the Autism Training Center can be made on-line at:

www.marshall.edu/coe/atc

Videotaped Self Modeling

By Amanda Glass,
Educational Specialist Sr.



To those of us who work and/or live with people diagnosed with autism, our heart strings are tugged each time we realize that our loved ones truly desire to socially connect with others even though their diagnosis makes it difficult for them to easily accomplish this goal. Over the years, the list of interventions for social skills has grown to include many common practices such as social stories, comic strip conversations and social skill groups. However, there is another intervention that is becoming more popular as technology abilities increase: Videotaped Self Modeling (VSM).

VSM is a method of intervention that allows individuals to learn social skills by observing themselves performing the targeted skill independently. It allows the person to learn by personal experience and observation. We know that most individuals with autism learn visually. Therefore, VSM appeals to their preferred learning style.

Recently, I used VSM to assist an individual with social greetings. After creating a list of five different ways to say "Hi" to peers, I videotaped my client saying "Hi" to several of his friends. When I got home, I deleted all parts of the tape showing him being prompted by an adult or struggling with any specific greeting. All that was left for the individual to review was his successful social greetings to peers. The goal was for him to learn from what he did right, not what he did wrong.

Another opportunity for an individual to use VSM is when they know how to perform a series of tasks, but they have difficulty ordering them correctly. For

example, during a bedtime routine, the child can change himself, bathe, brush his teeth and eat a nighttime snack; however, he performs the tasks in an incorrect order. The child could be videotaped performing all tasks, then arranged correctly on the tape for review. Once again, the child is able to learn by watching herself successfully complete the task.

It's important to remember that interventions used to assist individuals with autism may not work for every child. However, every child could benefit from an increased level of self esteem, so you may want to give VSM a try. It will take some effort, but you'll find it's worth it.

Reference:

Scott Bellini: Making (and Keeping) Friends: A Model for Social Skills Instruction

CRISIS SERVICES IN WV STUDY ANNOUNCEMENT

*By Martha Minter,
Community Access*

Community Access, Inc. was recently awarded a grant from the WV Disabilities Council to conduct a state-wide study on the availability and quality of crisis services for **children with developmental disabilities**, including those children who have co-existing emotional or mental health disorders. Community Access, Inc. (CAI) has provided services and supports to individuals with disabilities since 1992.

Community Access is seeking information from both parents and providers for this study. **Information**

gained from the surveys will assist the Council in the development of recommendations for system and service improvement. Individual information will be kept confidential and will only be released as non-identifiable or aggregate data.

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact **Martha Minter** at Community Access, and she will mail you a survey to complete. You can reach Martha the following ways:

Voice mail: 304-766-2413

Email: mlm420@aol.com

US mail: 2027 Huber Rd.,
Charleston, WV 25314

In your request be sure to include your name and address, and a survey will be mailed to you promptly. **Participation in this study is purely voluntary and will have no bearing on the services or benefits your child currently receives.**

Community Access would like to hear from as many parents who have children with developmental disabilities as possible.

On-line Autism Certification Coursework Available

Marshall University now offers two of the three courses needed for the autism teaching certificate on-line. Courses available include:

Fall, 2005 CISP 427/527E Introduction to Autism

Spring, 2006 CISP 662E, Instructional Characteristics of Autism

Also, available during the fall and spring semesters, CISP 664, Practicum in Autism.

To learn more: www.marshall.edu/coe/atc

To register: www.marshall.edu/registrar



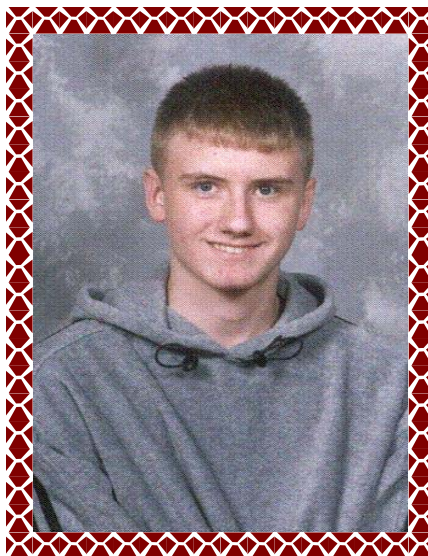
As the 2004-2005 year comes to an end, I am looking at the yearbook my grandson brought home from school today and reflecting on years past. When Brent became a client of the Autism Training Center, little did I know of the positive changes that were to begin in his life. Brent began receiving services in the 1995-1996 school year. At that time, he had echolalia and did not communicate very much. I was even told he probably would never talk in ordinary conversations. (Wow, did that person have a surprise coming to them and today is still amazed at what he has accomplished.)

After a year of Positive Behavior Support Training with the school where he was in the special needs preschool, Brent seemed to explode with verbalization. He also began making more eye contact with people. I also learned how I was playing into Brent's gimmicks to avoid doing a task. I was so excited hearing him say words and being able to communicate that I didn't realize he would start talking to get out of doing something. In the beginning, Brent really knew how to push my buttons, until the Educational Specialists started pointing things out to me. It took a lot of hard work from me and his school staff during this period but it was all worth every minute of it.

Brent has been involved in many activities: T-ball, piano lessons, karate class, cub scouts, and basketball manager for the Montgomery Middle School Wolfpack the last four years. Ten years ago I did not believe these activities would be possible for him.

Another School Year Gone By

By Dana White, Community Partner Coordinator



Congratulations to Brent White for being chosen as having the most school spirit at school and good luck in high school!

The hardest experience for Brent to go through occurred when he was seven years old and my husband passed away. He could not understand why Papa Al was asleep in his "treasure chest" and why he wouldn't talk to him again. I learned from that experience just how important visuals were to Brent. Had he gone through the whole burial process he would have understood more about what happened to his Papa Al. With the help of a social story and experiencing the loss of another loved one, he has since learned what happens when a loved one dies.

The years have gone by fast in his short life and he has accomplished so very much, thanks to the support and training of the Autism Training Center, Montgomery Middle School Staff and especially his autism teacher, Coach Joey McCoy who took such a big interest in Brent.

Needless to say it was a pleasant surprise when I opened up

the school yearbook today and saw that Brent was chosen as the boy with the most school spirit this year as part of the school's superlatives.

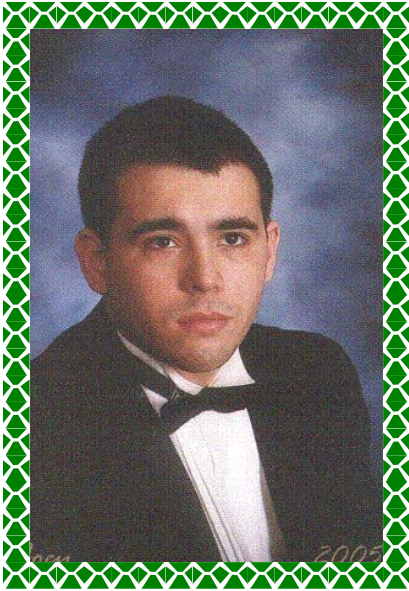
Brent is 15 years old now and we are looking forward to starting his high school years in the fall. I know it will be a great, but challenging experience for us.

Thank you staff at the Autism Training Center for being there for us and for caring about those with autism spectrum disorders.

What Changes Can Take Place in Your Child's Life Using a Positive Behavior Support Approach



Brent White at 9 years old.

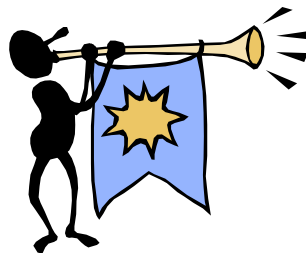
**Congratulations to Joseph Ramella!**

Joe graduated this Spring
from Capitol High School.

He plans to work and take some
college courses.



Joe and his date on prom night.

CONGRATULATIONS !**Aaron Dailey**

Aaron won 2 medals and 1 ribbon at the
Cabell County Special Olympics.

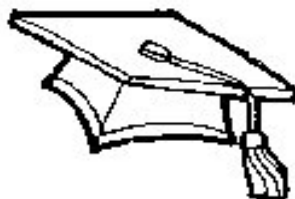
Aaron also graduated from 5th grade at
Milton Elementary's graduation ceremony on
May 26th, 2005.

Way to go, Aaron!





COF Preschool Graduation in Huntington, WV



Circle of Friends Preschool Graduation Day

Circle of Friends preschools in Weirton and Huntington, WV held ceremonies for graduating preschool students.

Graduation day was held on June 2, 2005 at the Weirton Heights Elementary School for the Circle of Friends Preschool in Weirton, WV. The preschool had 11 graduates. The children sang "Graduation Day" and "I'm a Little Star." They were then escorted out of the room to prepare for graduation. The children then entered the multi-purpose room with "Pomp and Circumstance" being played. Mr. Sukins, the principal of the school, handed out the diplomas to each child. Events and activities that the children did all year was shown in a Power Point Presentation to the music "Children Are Our Future." More than 60 people attended the graduation celebration.

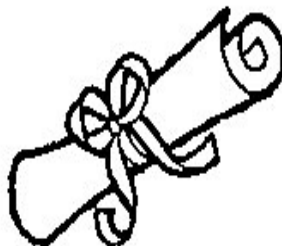
The Circle of Friends Preschool in Huntington WV celebrated it's third Graduation ceremony on June 6, 2005 by proudly sending 4 graduates off to Kindergarten. The students performed 3 songs for their guests, presented flowers to their mothers and then were called to the stage to accept a friendship certificate or diploma. Graduates, guests and classmates then returned to the classroom to enjoy special graduation lunch and celebratory cake. Each graduate received a copy of Dr. Seuss's Oh the Places You'll Go book and other graduation goodies to send them on their way.



COF Preschool Graduation in Huntington, WV



COF Preschool Graduation in Weirton, WV



Children from Beyond

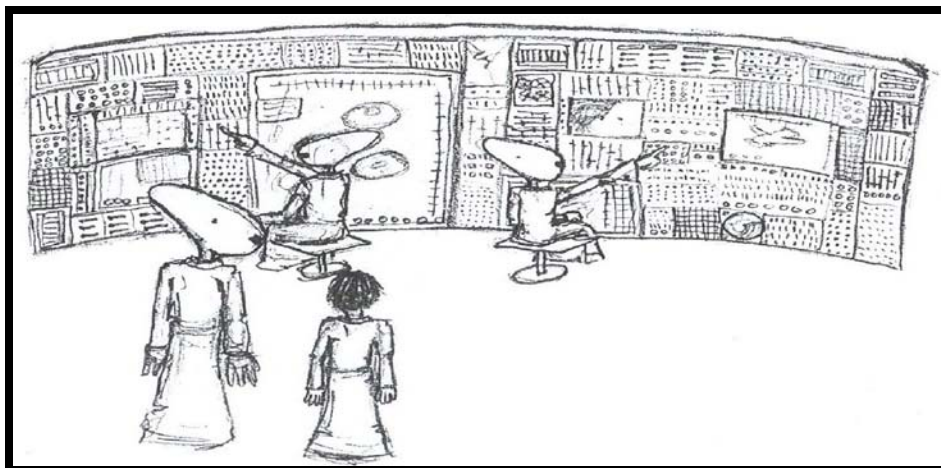
By Gary L. Akers, Age 17

Following is an excerpt from a book, Children from Beyond, that Gary Akers is writing. Gary is a senior at Morgantown High School in Morgantown, WV, and has a sister with autism. Gary is working hard to complete the book and has even enlisted some help from a friend who is composing pictures to go with the book.

Kyle Patterson was your average teenager, he was average build, around 126 pounds, and about six feet tall. He had light blue eyes, and brown hair. A 10th grader in high school, with a fair number of friends and about a 3.0 grade point average. Yes, it sounds like Kyle has a pretty good life. But that's not the case, however, because Kyle has a secret he hides from his friends, a thing that holds him back from doing the things he wants to do. You see, Kyle has a sister with autism, a disorder of the brain, that affects their senses, and makes them mentally impaired. Even though Kyle dislikes his sister, he still feels sorry for her and he swears that he will find the cause for autism and maybe cure and prevent it in the future.

Having a sister with autism was hard on Kyle. Tina made it hard for the whole family. She made Kyle's mom and dad argue with each other and take all their anger out on Kyle occasionally. Tina only wanted certain things at certain times and threw tantrums all day long. Kyle was about to give up all hope. He bent down at his dresser and began to cry. But something caught his eye in the window. It was an odd looking airplane moving closer and closer toward the house. He could see it in more detail now. It was circular, saucer shaped, and had three giant oval lights on it, two green ones and a red one. Closer and closer it moved toward the house, "No it can't be," Kyle said to himself, "It is, it's a flying saucer."

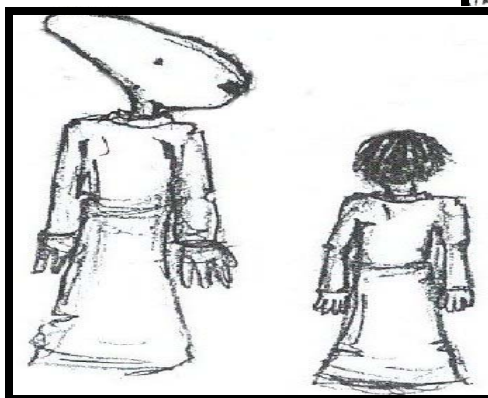
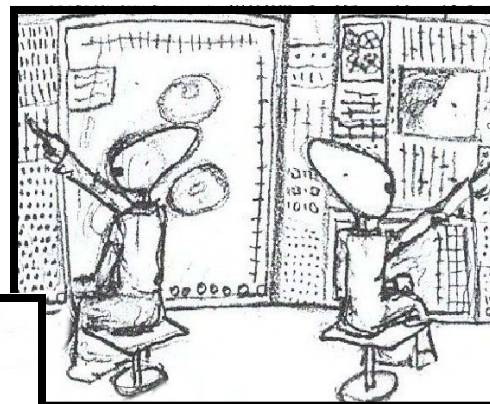
And then suddenly, a twisted half human face appeared over



him. It was green with big black golf ball sized eyes. It did not have any ears or a nose, but it did have a small mouth right above its chin. "Aggggh!," Kyle screamed. He tried to move but he could not, "HA, HA, HA", the face spoke, in a transparent voice, "calm down little human," "What are you, and what have you done with my family?," Kyle mumbled. "I'm what you humans call an alien," said the transparent voice, "But don't get onto that subject." Do you know why you are here?" Kyle tried to shake his head no, but something had hold of his forehead. The alien spoke again "Do you know why your sister is autistic?" "No why?"

Kyle answered. "Your sister is autistic, and all the other humans who are autistic because, the alien paused, "because something went terribly wrong with a human brain experiment we performed," "What I am about to tell you is something, beyond belief."

Stayed tuned for the continuing story!



"What I am about to tell you is something, beyond belief."

10 Habits of Successful College Students

By Kim Ramsey, College Program Coordinator



Amy Goodman Reading

If you are thinking about going to college after high school, you should begin preparing now. It is never too early to begin practicing the 10 Habits of Successful College Students.

Attend class

- Go to every class – even classes you find boring
- Take notes, participate, and engage the instructor
- If you must miss a class, let the professor know why you were absent. Ask a classmate if you may copy their notes
- Review notes after every class

Sit in a preferred location

- The front row is best for most students, but it is most important to find the area where you can listen, pay attention, and clearly see the instructor

Develop a relationship with your instructor

- Attend instructors office hours
- Learn when and how to ask for help
- Ask questions if you don't understand something

Have a study schedule

- Keep up with all assignments, even if you don't have homework each day or that day

- Have a specific time and comfortable place for studying
- Remember to schedule time to work on long-term assignments and study for exams

Choose courses wisely

- Choose courses that interest you
- Register for classes taught by instructors that you like
- When possible, schedule classes during the times of day when you are at your peak performance
- Remember to complete core requirements – even classes you do not enjoy

Exercise

- Keep moving
- Understand physical fitness leads to alertness, good attention span, better sleep, and more energy

Get involved in campus life

- Visit the Student Activity Office. Ask for a list of clubs, activities and opportunities to volunteer
- Join a club with other students who have similar interests
- If you choose to disclose your disability, establish a relationship with the Office of Student Services
- Be prepared to provide documentation and request reasonable accommodations

Eat healthy

- Avoid gaining weight, sometimes referred to as *The Freshman 15*
- Plan meals. Avoid high-fat salad dressings, casseroles, high calorie desserts
- Anticipate high-stress situations or times of day that may trigger overeating
- Keep a record of your weight
- Have a strategy for when you slip-up

Take care of your health

- Make good lifestyle choices
- If you are ill, let someone know
- If you take medications regularly,



Andy Reinhardt Working

be sure to have prescriptions filled several days before you take the last pill

Have fun

- Avoid stress that can interfere with academic performance
- Reward yourself for your good study habits by making time for having fun and doing things you enjoy

Words of Wisdom

By Peggy Hovatter,
Education Specialist

I have had the distinct pleasure of getting to know Robert, a 16-year old high school student. It didn't take long to see that he has a wonderful sense of humor and views life in a way I found myself very envious of!

Here are some of Robert's "Words of Wisdom"...

1. With regard to sleeping in class..."What if you're dreaming about what the teacher is saying?"
2. On temper tantrums..."It's like being possessed by a demon, you

lose control of yourself."

3. "Why don't you WALK the sweeper?"

4. When someone sees students laughing at someone misbehaving... "Why would you want to do that? That's not nice."

5. With regard to (school) staff... "I thought 'staff' was a disease!"

6. On being prepared for class... "It means you're 'armed'."

7. About self-calming... "Count to five and do algebra."

8. Teacher: "Spread out the cards." Robert: "Get the butter knife!"

9. A teacher was talking about Samuel Adams during history class. Robert replied: "Didn't he make a beverage?"

10. Joke of the day: What do skunks say before they eat? "Let us spray."

Lessons Learned: How I Improved My Relationship with the School System

By Melanie Corley,
Community Partner

My twins, Brandon and Logan, started school when they were 3 years old. Being that they were autistic this was a very stressful time. The boys were non-verbal and due to that, had developed a lot of challenging behaviors. Concerned about the stories I was hearing about the special education system, I developed a negative attitude. Having many doubts about the school's intentions and my twins' abilities, I went to our first IEP with an "I have to fight" attitude. My attitude became the biggest obstacle for my children.

Our attitudes affect our children's education. We need to give schools a chance before we make a judgment. Educate yourself about the IEP process. Give teachers a chance to learn about autism. As a parent of autistic twins, I did not learn all I know about autism in one day and I don't expect teachers to. The most important advice I can give is to have high expectations of your child. Keep the dreams you had for your child before you knew they had autism. When things seem impossible keep trying. We all make mistakes but that's what we learn from. My new found discovery of being positive came slowly for me. I had many challenges and disappointments, but for each there were solutions. Negative situations do occur but there is an equal amount of good if we look for it.

My turning point came when Peggy Hovatter, West Virginia Autism Training Center Education Specialist Sr. came into my family's life. Peggy gave us the tools to teach our sons to communicate by giving them a voice. When my twins began to communicate, the challenging behaviors decreased. She also trained us and our team on Positive Behavior Support (PBS). Before PBS, I was dealing with the misconception that because the boys had autism they would not succeed. I went through PBS not fully focused but finally it reached me and I learned the benefits of being positive. This changed my relationship with the school and with my sons. We have now had 2 amazing school years



Brandon Cutright

Logan Cutright

and are looking forward to a third. I believe when we all work together we can have phenomenal results.

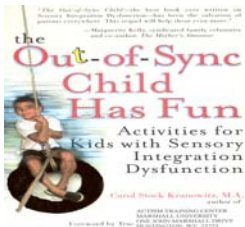
My sons are now talking and are in regular education...two things I was told they would never do. I no longer accept negative opinions about my twins' future. They are so wonderfully unique. It truly amazes me how much I have learned from them.

I want to express my gratitude to all those who have inspired and encouraged us. Academy Primary School in Buckhannon has a wonderful team of teachers and aides. They are creative, proactive and supportive. Peggy Hovatter, I could never say it enough, thank you for all that you are. You have made a beautiful difference in our lives. Thanks to my mom and dad for all of your love and support; we could not do it without you. Autism Training Center, thank you for all the wonderful things you do. Thank you, Brandon and Logan, for teaching me to throw my heart into it and the rest will follow. You are more wonderful than I could have ever dreamed of.

A Book Review of Carol Kranowitz's The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun

By Jackie Moales,
Teacher and Parent

Shortly after my son received the diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, I began to read as much as I could about autism spectrum disorders (ASD). I knew that my son had some sensory issues which often accompany ASD, but I had never heard of sensory integration dysfunction. The occupational therapist at my son's school recommended the book, The Out-of-Sync Child by Carol Kranowitz. I bought and read it, highlighting and noting things of interest. It is a wonderful book, full of information and insight.



Much to my delight, Carol Kranowitz has written a second book concerning dysfunction in sensory integration (DSI), The Out-of-Sync child Has Fun. What a wonderful title! These children, who struggle to understand and experience a world that is strange, uncomfortable or even painful for them, can have fun!

The first chapter defines and gives information about DSI and its facets. It is a complex problem that may affect a child's development, behavior, learning, communication skills, friendships, and play. It may affect one or all of their sensory systems. What may be ordinary challenges for most children are often confusing and threatening for a child with DSI. "Children with DSI often do not feel safe... They do what they must to

survive, playing it as safe as necessary."

What can parents, teachers, and others do to help a child "get in sync"? In our childhood, our most fun times were sensory rich. We climbed trees, rode bikes, made sand castles, stomped in mud puddles, and ran under the sprinkler. We felt safe. Many of today's activities structure the sensory-motor experience right out of child's play. Carol Kranowitz addresses this issue with "SAFE" activities.

"SAFE": Sensory-motor, Appropriate, Fun, and Easy. She gives "do's and don'ts" tips as well as listing and explaining the "seven drops." (1) Drop your voice. (2) Drop your body. (3) Drop your TV remote. (4) Drop your guard. (5) Drop your defenses. (6) Drop your batteries. (7) Drop your misconception that fun is frivolous.

Parents, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and teachers have written to Carol Kranowitz to share their experiences and wisdom. "I realized with my son that the 'be carefuls' weren't helping. They were just undermining his confidence... So I tried to break the habit..., and shifted instead to only giving him information that would help him." "I let my daughter do things to help her sensory system that other children might be told not to do... of course, I do not let her do this in other people's houses – only her own." "We have the constant phrase, 'just try it once.'" "Kyle has a neurological condition in which his nervous system doesn't work like yours and mine... We really have eight senses: the five we learn about in school, plus one that controls our balance, one that controls the touch of things against us, and one that controls the amount of pressure input we feel." "The brain needs safety and involvement for positive learning experiences. If little children are not motivated to learn, check how safe they feel!"

This book is full of activities that are SAFE for children with different types of sensory needs. (A Shaving Cream Car Wash is an activity for the tactile sense but what if your child tends to put things in his or her mouth? You use pudding or gelatin instead!) It has a glossary of terms, where to find recommended materials, a list of suggested sources for special items or materials that may not be easy to locate, suggested books and other media, as well as lists of items for a "SAFE Activities Toy Chest." It is a wonderful resource for parents and professionals alike.



Research to Find the Genetic Factors in ASD

The Duke Center for Human Genetics (CHG) is conducting research into the genetics of autism and related disorders. The goal of these research efforts is to discover the genetic factors that contribute to the cause of autism and related disorders.

Please join us in our research efforts to find the gene(s) that contribute to autism spectrum disorders. In order to detect these genes, many families are needed to participate in this study.

For more information in the WV, OH and KY area:

Scott Short at: 1-866-308-3032 or
scott.short@duke.edu

Duke CHG at:
<http://www.chg.duke.edu> and
www.exploringautism.org



What About Us? Supporting Siblings of Persons with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, Pt 1

By Gloria Sage,
Program Coordinator Sr.

Brothers and sisters of persons with autism or other special health, developmental or mental health needs share many of the same concerns that parents of children with special needs have, including feelings of isolation, a need for information, feelings of guilt, concerns about the future, and care giving demands. Siblings may also have some concerns that are unique to them, such as dealing with peer issues, embarrassment, resentment and pressure to achieve. Since siblings will be in the lives of the family members with special needs longer than anyone else, it is important for parents, other family members and service providers to support the needs of these brothers and sisters.

Below are suggestions, based upon interviews with siblings themselves, for parents and service providers to support siblings' needs and provide ways to increase their opportunities:

Provide age-appropriate information. Siblings will have a life-long and ever-changing need for information on their brother's or sister's disability, and its treatment and implications. Parents and service providers should proactively provide siblings with helpful information and agencies should prepare materials specifically for young readers.

Acknowledge concerns. Siblings will experience a wide array of emotions concerning their brother or sister's special needs. These feelings should be both expected

and acknowledged by parents, other family members and service providers. These concerns will change over time and parents and others will need to learn what these changing concerns are.

Provide siblings with opportunities to meet other siblings of children with special needs.

Many parents are connected to support groups or have contact with other parents who have a child with special needs. Connecting siblings with others who are "in their shoes" can be a big support for these siblings. This can be done through a sibling support group, such as a Sibshop, or through informal support by connecting two or more siblings who share a similar situation. Sibnet is a listserv that connects siblings online so they can talk about their concerns with each other.

One-on one time with parents is essential. Children need to know from their parents' words and deeds that their parents care about them as individuals. Parents should set aside special time to spend with the siblings, where they are receiving the parents' full attention.

Families should have high expectations for the family member with special needs. As adults, typically developing siblings will play an important role in the life of their brother or sister with disabilities. Parents can help siblings now by helping the child with a disability to acquire skills that will help them become as independent as possible as an adult. All children should have chores and some personal responsibility, according to their level of ability. When siblings see that everyone in the family has responsibilities, it will help to minimize resentment expressed by siblings when there are two sets of rules—one for them, and another for the brother or sister with special needs.

Parents should involve the siblings in making plans for the

future of the child with special needs. Siblings often worry about what obligations they will have toward their brother or sister in the future. When parents make plans for the future and listen to and involve the typically developing siblings in this process, it can do much to reassure them. Brothers and sisters should be afforded the right to pursue their own dreams and live their own lives. This includes a say in **whether** and **how** they will be involved the lives of their siblings with disabilities as adults.

Agencies and service providers should actively reach out to siblings. Siblings could be invited, (but not required) to attend IEP, IFSP and IPP meetings, clinic visits and transition planning meetings. Advisory Boards could reserve board seats for siblings, which would give the board a unique and important perspective and reflect the agency's concern for the well-being of brothers and sisters.

Create a local program specifically for brothers and sisters. If your community has a parent support group, involve them in getting a similar effort started for siblings. The Sibling Support Project is a wonderful resource for providing training and technical assistance on how to create a local program for siblings. More information can be found at their website at <http://www.thearc.org/siblingsupport/meetingtheconcernsof....htm> or just go to search engine: google.com and in the search window type in: What Siblings Would like Parents and Support Providers to Know by Donald Meyer. Then click on The Sibling Support Project.

(This information was excerpted and adapted from *What Siblings Would like Parents and Support Providers to Know* by Donald Meyer.)

AUTISM TRAINING CENTER LENDING LIBRARY

The Autism Training Center offers resources such as books, video cassettes, audio cassettes and research articles through its lending library. The library is physically located at the Marshall University Huntington campus, Old Main building, room 317-B. The library is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 pm. Materials may be reserved or checked out by calling 1-800-344-5115. Please be prepared to give us your client registry number and the names and/or catalog numbers of the resources you wish to have sent to you.

For a complete list of books and frequently asked questions, please go to our website:

<http://www.marshall.edu/coe/atc>

Click on: **Library**



WV Autism Training Center, MU
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Services
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755-2430

Please remember to Join Us!



for our Autism Walk, to be held on April 29, 2006, at Ritter Park, Huntington, WV



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